

**Remarks Honoring the 1999  
National Basketball Association  
Champion San Antonio Spurs**

*September 7, 1999*

Thank you very much. Please be seated, everyone.

Welcome to the White House. I want to say a special word of welcome to Peter Holt, to Gregg Popovich, obviously, to the San Antonio Spurs. We're also joined today by four Members of the House of Representatives from the great State of Texas: Congressmen Gonzalez, Rodriguez, Bonilla, and Edwards. And we thank them for being here.

I want to acknowledge the team captains, Avery Johnson and David Robinson, who is the only graduate of the Naval Academy playing in the NBA. That's important, because I have to stick up for the service academies here. It's part of my job, you know. *[Laughter]* I'd also like to offer a special word of welcome to Sean Elliott. He's had a tough few months; we're glad to see him here. Thank you very much. Thank you.

Everybody who works around here at the White House and who knows me knows that I am a basketball fanatic. You know, I live for the NCAA finals and the NBA finals, and I follow basketball very closely. And I've been fortunate enough to be good friends with two or three reasonably successful basketball coaches, who have taught me a little about the game.

And it's really—it's a lot like politics. You get ahead, and then you get behind. *[Laughter]* Then you try to get ahead again. And normally, you don't know whether you're going to win until right before the end of the game.

And I like this team. They started 6 and 8, and finished 46 and 7. And when we were watching the NBA, the semifinals and the finals—and I always have people come over and watch the games with us—and one night Hillary and I were watching with a bunch of our friends, one of whom was from one of the other towns you were playing, Coach. *[Laughter]* And he kept cheering and cheering and cheering. And finally, Hillary looked at him and said, "Now, tell the truth. Don't you think the Spurs are the best team in bas-

ketball this year?" And he said, "Well, of course." *[Laughter]*

And I don't think there's much more you can say. This is a team with enormous talent, enormous dedication, a steel will, and a great heart. And they won because they deserved to win. And I think all of us who love this sport, not just people from San Antonio or from Texas, were elated by their success, because they deserved it, and they earned it. And I'm glad to welcome them all to the White House today.

Thank you very much.

*[At this point, Peter Holt, chairman, Gregg Popovich, coach and general manager, and team member Avery Johnson made brief remarks.]*

You know, there's a thousand things I'd like to say. *[Laughter]* I identify with a lot of people on the scene. You know, when the commentators kept saying, every time Avery was not guarded, he scored. Did you notice that? And they kept referring to one person who made the mistake of saying he really didn't belong in the NBA and could never lead a team to a championship. You know, when I was Governor of Arkansas, that's what they said about me when I was running for President. I identify with that. *[Laughter]*

And then every time things were slightly in doubt, the television camera would do this close-up on Tim Duncan's eyes—*[laughter]*—and I knew they were going to win. I'm trying to develop that killer look. *[Laughter]* We're about to enter all these tough budget negotiations, and I'm trying to visualize what Duncan looked like when it got really close, you know. *[Laughter]* But if any of you guys want to stay around and help me through the next month, you're welcome to do it. *[Laughter]* Government scale's a little low for you, but it's rewarding work—it's rewarding work. *[Laughter]*

Let me just say one thing, seriously. I don't want to talk about the contents of it. But one of the most interesting telephone conversations I ever had in my life—with someone I had never met, especially—was with Coach Popovich, when I called to congratulate him. And I realized that he was a man with a keen understanding of human nature, and the human spirit, and what it really takes to make

good things happen. And I want to thank you publicly for that conversation and for your remembering what we talked about as we walked in today. I'd say you've got a good chance to repeat.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:08 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to team members Sean Elliott and Tim Duncan.

### **Satellite Remarks Launching the NetAid Website**

*September 8, 1999*

Thank you, Mr. Secretary-General. I am delighted to share this historic moment with you, with President Mandela, with Prime Minister Blair, and all our friends supporting NetAid.

The launching of this website represents a truly important new front in the struggle against poverty. Information technology has been vital to the prosperity achieved by many nations this decade, including ours. The people of the world have never communicated better or more easily, and that has spurred countless new ideas and opportunities.

But it's also a fact that this prosperity has been very uneven within and among countries. The democratic promise of the Internet, therefore, is not yet fulfilled, because vast populations around the world still have no access to computers at all. Through USAID, the United States Government has pledged millions of dollars to build Internet access in other countries, especially in Africa. But the gulf between the haves and the have-nots is growing much too quickly.

Today we build a bridge across that gulf. NetAid is the creation of a remarkable partnership combining the international reach of the United Nations development program and the powerful resources of the private sector.

I want to thank Cisco Systems' John Chambers as well as the other technology companies. Thanks to them, one of the largest websites ever built has been created to spread information about extreme poverty and to help concerned citizens do something about it. The site will be available around

the world, including places where Internet access has been limited, so that a farmer in Africa can find out more about fighting drought; a woman hoping to start a business in Bangladesh can find investors from other countries; a school in Indiana can raise money for a school in Indonesia.

I commend all the sponsors of NetAid for their generosity and vision. And like millions of people, I'm looking forward to the simultaneous concerts on October 9th.

Some people say the rise of the Internet will inevitably bring the world together; some say it will inevitably widen the gap between rich and poor nations. But nothing is inevitable. We have a choice about the future we will build. NetAid sends a powerful signal that we intend to make the Internet an instrument for bettering all our lives, not just those wealthy enough to afford a computer. The millennium should be a time for joining and common purpose. Today we do just that. NetAid will make our global village more responsible and a lot more global.

Now, it is my honor to be the first person from North America to log on to the site. And thank you very much.

Back to you, Mr. Secretary-General.

NOTE: The President spoke by satellite at 12:20 p.m. from Room 459 in the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan; former President Nelson Mandela of South Africa; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; and John T. Chambers, president and chief executive officer, Cisco Systems, Inc. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

### **Remarks on Health Care Legislative Priorities**

*September 8, 1999*

Thank you very much. Dr. Copeland; Mrs. Copeland; Secretary Shalala, thank you for your outstanding leadership; Surgeon General Satcher; OPM Director Lachance; to all the advocates here for seniors, for children, for people with disabilities; representatives of the various health care organizations.

I am of the opinion that there's really not much left for me to say. *[Laughter]* You know, since I've been in this office and this